

FOREWORD

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perienced. He told me of the effect of the tropical dawn on tropical forest peoples. Traveling in the dark, he noted, Indian canoeemen tend to break the monotony by singing and talking, but just before the sun appears, they suddenly fall silent, as if in expectation of a sacred moment. Again and again, in camps and while traveling with Brazilian Indians, I was reminded of Quain's perception. 114

Although Robert Murphy rightly points out the decline of population and the trend toward disintegration of Trumai culture even in 1938, the Trumai were a functioning primitive society when Quain visited them. The upper Xingú River area was still very difficult to reach at that time. In 1938 access was by way of Cuyabá, the capital of Matto Grosso. Quain traveled from Cuyabá to the Indian post Simões Lopes by truck, then over savanna grasslands for six days on oxen, then down the Kuliseu River by canoe for seven days to a mission station maintained by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Young. After a delay here of almost three weeks, he spent another three weeks reaching the Trumai, traveling slowly and visiting several tribal groups *en route*. The Kamayurá, at whose village he stayed shortly, provided him with canoeemen for the last lap of his journey. It took Quain 38 days to return up river and cross the savanna country to Simões Lopes on leaving the Trumai in late 1938. 114
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Quain's letters to his mother and to his colleagues describe his trip to the Trumai vividly. To quote a passage telling of his experiences on the upper Kuliseu River on his way to the mission station: 123

The river journey was pleasant, until we began to have trouble. Even then I enjoyed it thoroughly. I had too much baggage for two canoes as I had planned. We had to use three. Besides myself I have two Brazilian men and a boy to help with the canoes. I had to paddle one myself and I enjoyed it thoroughly — despite the fact that white men aren't supposed to do that kind of thing. I gave the largest canoe with the most valuable cargo to the Brazilian whom I thought was the best canoeist. He had the boy to help with the paddling and poling through the rapids. Nevertheless it was his canoe which filled with water on the second day. We had to stop on a rock ledge and spread the things out to dry. Lots of rice and beans, papers and books, etc. It was evening. Not until the next morning did we realize that the sun barely touched the rocky ledge that we had chosen for drying the cargo. There was a wind — the worst of the dampness was removed before nightfall. Everything went well until we struck some swift rapids on the fifth day, when the same large canoe wrapped itself around a rock and the cargo went sailing down the river about eight miles an hour. I managed to rescue everything but a bag of farinha, a frying pan, a fishline and a couple of cakes of the hard unrefined sugar, which forms an important part of the diet throughout Matto Grosso.*

And about the Indians he wrote from the missionary station:

My work for the next month is going to be a jumble of languages. It may take a month to reach the Trumai because the Indians like to rest all the time. This means that I will have ample time to contact several in each of three different linguistic families (Carib, Arawak, Tupi). The Trumai are entirely unrelated. This

* Quain letter, July 13, 1938.

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Recent ethnographic researches have for the most part concentrated upon the Kamayurá (Galvão 1949, 1950, and 1952; Oberg 1953), the Waurá (de Lima 1949, 1950), and the Kuikuru (Robert Carneiro and Gertrude E. Dole, unpublished). Only incidentally have these observers commented upon the Trumai. Therefore, in 1953 when I had the opportunity to spend a little time in the upper Xingú area, I made a point of remaining a few days with the remnants of the Trumai. They were camped temporarily at Karajaja, the old village site, on a lake about half a mile away from the Kuluene River; their permanent houses were then at Anariatan, near the village site during Quain's visit. It was the dry season and the Trumai were fishing. There were only 24 persons in the group — six adult males, ten adult females, four boys and four girls. Three of the women were unmarried widows, and there was one unmarried girl just past puberty. The chieftain whose current name was Ilitoari (no doubt the Aloari of Quain's notes), was married to two sisters, and there were four monogamous families. Two of the men were old and unmarried. Thus, the Trumai were again united as a village (they had disbanded for a while). In 1953, however, there were not even enough men for the Trumai to participate in the intertribal spear-throwing contests, a sport in which they had once been famous throughout the area.

The process of steady social and cultural disintegration and depopulation, which was already apparent among the Trumai in 1938, has been a continuing one; and it is only a question of a very short time before these people cease to exist as a separate tribal group. Thus, the information and insights that Robert Murphy has brought together from Buell Quain's field work may be all that we shall ever have on Trumai life and society.

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February 1955

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IT is also 727

possible that more women may be needed for polygamous marriages, but the data do not indicate plural marriage to be of great significance. [595]

Pillage, also, inspires raids. The Kamayurá threatened to descend on the Trumai, after Quain left, to rob them of all the Western goods they had obtained. The Suyá took all the Trumai pots in a raid which occurred immediately before von den Steinen's second trip through the region.¹² The desire for goods is undoubtedly a motivating factor in particular raids, and it may also be a contributing factor in warfare generally, but since the material surplus is low throughout the area and retaliation almost certain, it is doubtful that this is a basic cause. 721 648

Insults, too, could provoke aggression. The Kamayurá threatened to chastise the Trumai because the latter were rumored to have made defamatory remarks about them. Continuous fear and insecurity can also lead a tribe to attack. Quain observed that the Trumai worked themselves up into such a state of terror that they were capable of desperate deeds. Needless to say, revenge expeditions tended to perpetuate hostility. [52]

Among the Trumai, no special prestige was derived from warfare, and the men did not boast of their prowess as warriors. Trumai men showed scars of old wounds to Quain, but only to impress him with the brutality of other tribes. To the Trumai, warfare was an occasion for fear, and not an opportunity to enhance one's status. 721 555

Warfare, however, is important in maintaining social cohesion within the communities. Quain noted that intra-social harmony and cooperation was low in the Trumai village. Leadership was weak, and there was little friendliness between the men. However, when an attack threatened, quarrels were forgotten and aggressions and anxieties were directed toward the outside world. Also, when members of other tribes were in the village, the whole tone and tempo of life changed, and the Trumai presented a united front. 182 721

This was made manifest during a visit of several Kamayurá. Despite their apprehension, the Trumai treated their guests as long absent brothers. There was much forced and nervous jocularity and talk. The men expressed tremendous affection towards each other and the Kamayurá by embraces and linking of arms. Industry and activity were high. The Trumai men went to catch fish to feed the guests and, upon returning, marched into the village singing gaily and led by their chief. After the Kamayurá left, the village lapsed with relief into its normal way of life. The men ceased to show affection for their comrades, and old quarrels broke out anew. 182 574 604

¹² Von den Steinen 1897, p. 144.

Specialization and Trade

439 Among the more distinctive features of upper Xingú culture are
community craft specialization and a widespread system of trade re-
[438] lationships. The Trumai traded among themselves, but the most im-
portant exchanges took place on the intertribal level, and it is here that
[182] the products of tribal specialization become significant to the economy.
[323] At the time of Quain's investigations, the Arawakans maintained a
monopoly on pottery, but the once active Trumai stone axe manu-
[317] facture had fallen into disuse. In its place, the Trumai were specializing
in the preparation of salt, obtained by burning a species of water-lily
and sifting the ashes. The Trumai depended on the Kamayurá for a
highly prized type of bow, as the proper wood was not found in their
[411] territory. According to Oberg, this black, rectangular bow was eagerly
sought by other tribes, also.²⁰

While the Kamayurá monopoly on these bows can be explained by
the local availability of the raw materials, craft specialization cannot
be looked upon simply as a function of the exclusive possession of certain
skills. Other arts diffused rapidly among the tribes, and it is evident
that the specialties remained such for non-economic reasons. For ex-
ample, the three Arawakan tribes, the Mehinaku, Kustenaú and Waurá,
all made pottery, but each traded their wares only with certain tribes.
The Bacairi obtained their pottery from the Kustenaú, who were, in
von den Steinen's time, their neighbors on the Batovi River. On the
Kuliseu, the Nahukwa traded for ceramics with the nearby Mehinaku,
while the Tupian-speaking tribes and the Trumai relied on the Waurá.
Despite the fact that each Arawakan tribe dealt with its nearest neigh-
bors, the exclusiveness of these relationships is not a physical necessity.
[602] The Trumai could have obtained Mehinaku pottery. They had many
kinship ties with the Mehinaku, and even conducted joint puberty rites.
[881] The distance between them was not great. Manifestly some standardized
channeling of trade relationships existed.

This is further confirmed by the confinement of pottery manufacture
to the Arawakans. It is probable that when the various groups first
settled in the area, the Arawakans were the only ceramicists. With the
development of close intertribal relationships, however, there was every
opportunity for the craft to diffuse. It could have been learned by
outsiders in trips to Arawakan villages and then practiced at home, as
the clay is easily gotten from the river bottoms. Obvious means for its
diffusion were marriage or capture of Arawakan women. But the manu-
facture of pottery was not observed by Quain in any non-Arawakan
[303] village of the area, despite the fact that Arawakan women were living
in many such communities. In the Trumai village no pottery was made,

²⁰ Oberg 1953, p. 30.

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although a Mehinaku woman and a Suyá woman who had dwelled among the Waurá were living there. 439

The origin of specialization apparently lies in the diversity of the original cultures of the upper Xingú tribes. While a great degree of cultural homogeneity was subsequently attained through interaction and diffusion, certain culturally specialized items became integral to the trade relationships that were a functional part of intertribal social life. Trade became standardized, and monopolies were thereby perpetuated. The Kamayurá-type bow and the Waurá pot were not only essential to the Trumai economy, but trade in these items with these tribes was expected and served to reinforce the structure of the supra-village society. 182 439

In addition to trade in specialized products, there was active exchange of other items of Western and native manufacture, such as feathers, fishhooks, line, cotton yarn, cloth, paper, beads, and trinkets. This, however, did not require organized trading trips, as did the exchange of the specialized products. The Trumai traveled for the specific purpose of trading salt or securing pots and bows, although such transactions were also carried out during ordinary visits and at intertribal ceremonials. The non-specialized items were taken along on all visits in anticipation of a lively afternoon of trading, but they were incidental to such expeditions. 439 484 [177]

Despite the economic foundation of upper Xingú trade, all exchanges were considered gifts. No aspect of trade was recognized as divorced from personal relations. Food was shared freely in the community and did not enter into trade. Quain was the only person in the Trumai village who traded to obtain food. 439 437 431 [123]

Quain believed that there was a scale of values and a concept of equivalence in trade, as certain proffered articles were rejected by sellers as inadequate. The individual exchanges indicated some equivalence, and there was a tendency for particular categories of goods to be exchanged. Men traded arrows for fishhooks and gourds for small pots. Trinkets also formed a class. However, when dealing in specialized products, payment in another specialty was not required. Western goods were especially desired. Knives and axes were in great demand, and, once given to an Indian by a white man, they entered into active trade circulation. There was sufficient cross-cutting between the classes of articles to suggest the operation of a more comprehensive scale of values, but, unfortunately, Quain had to leave the Trumai before this could be verified. 439 435 [177]

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[524] It was significant that Aloari, probably the most aggressive person in the village, was often an organizer and always a main participant in the games. On the other hand, he never cooperated in group work.

[524] This conventionalized form of exchange, which Quain called the trade game, had a strong functional role in Trumai culture, but there are indications that it was of outside origin. One informant said that it was a Bakairi custom, and Quain thought that the "game" might have been introduced by Bakairi traders bringing goods from the Indian post on the Paranatinga River.¹

The Household

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622 Among both the Waurá and the Kamayurá the extended family occupied its own house, and the head of the lineage was considered a sub-chief of the village.² Such unilocal, co-resident and extended family groupings, which were typical among tribes of the upper Xingú, were absent in the Trumai village.

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613 Consanguineally close male relatives usually formed co-resident units, but these nuclei of kinsmen were very small and did not constitute an entire household. Furthermore, they were related to each other through male or female lines. Due to village patrilocality, there was a tendency for patrilineally related males to live together, but this did not result in the establishment of a patrilineal lineage for several reasons. Among them the high death rate was very important.

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[65] Maibu's house illustrates the eclectic nature of the Trumai household. 592
594 Four nuclear families, totaling fourteen people, lived in it. Hanging their hammocks from one of the two center posts were Katauka, his son Kamkuti, his brother's son Autuki, and another brother's son and his wife. At the opposite end of the house were Maibu and his wife, the wife's son by Maibu's deceased brother, Maibu's sister Ayenuke, Makurawa, a classificatory sister's son, and Makurawa's wife and their three children. Although everyone in the household was related, bonds were closer between those people who hung their hammocks from the same post.

589 Despite the fact that the household, as a unit, had no specific functions, it established the framework within which certain interpersonal dependencies were worked out. 592
182 Bride-capture, intertribal warfare, divorce, and early death caused a significant proportion of the Trumai to be temporarily or permanently without mates. This disadvantage was

[197] ¹ The trade game was possibly borrowed from the Bakairi, as its existence among this group has been reported by Oberg (1963, p. 72). However, craft specialization and trade on the upper Xingú predates the Indian post. Cf. von den Steinen 1897, pp. 198, 207.

² De Lima (1980, p. 8.) reports this arrangement among the Waurá, and Oberg (1963, p. 46.) adds that the position of house chief tends to pass in the male line in the Kamayurá village.

TRUMAI SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

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mitigated by intra-household sharing and the performance of services, normally done by mates, by co-resident relatives of the opposite sex. In this way unmarried persons could be integrated within the Trumai economy.

Among the twenty-eight persons of marriage age in the Trumai village, there were only eight unions involving seventeen persons. The eleven unmarried included one widower with a young child, one divorced man with a child, three widows with children, four unmarried men, and two unmarried women.

One of the widows was married during Quain's sojourn, but the other two were considered too old. One of the unmarried women subsequently took a mate, but the other, who had a clubfoot, was thought to be too old and ugly for marriage, although several men had sexual relations with her. Two of the unmarried men were probably also considered too old for marriage, a third was seeking a wife, and the fourth showed little interest in obtaining one. Neither the widower nor the divorced man were seeking wives at the time.

All these persons had made some sort of adjustment through their relatives. The incorporation of two of the unmarried men and of one of the widows into Nitvary's household shows how a functional interdependence within the household was achieved, despite the lack of a lineage in residence. Living at one end of the house were two old unmarried men, Yahu and Yakuma. At the other end were Nitvary, his wife Kaiti, his widowed mother Fayeru, and his young sister Kayaya. Gift-giving and food-sharing went on between all of the people in the house, but the two single men depended most on Fayeru, whom they called "sister," while Nitvary's needs were provided for by his wife. The members of the household were all dependent on each other, as Kaiti alone would have been hard pressed to do woman's work for two more men. Their presence, however, meant more food for the house.

In Aloari's house his unmarried brother Tun provided food for the cooking pots of Aloari's wife Yumunuwa, while her brother Oirupa exchanged services with his classificatory sister Yawala, the club-footed woman. By this free flow of food and service, which was especially marked between the sexes, each individual was economically fully functional, and everyone in the household was adequately cared for.

Most of the arguments in the village occurred between members of different houses. Aloari, his brother, and his brother-in-law showed considerable personal antipathy toward Maibu and jealousy of his status as chief. When a serious conflict broke out in the village over a marriage, it took the form of verbal quarrels between members of different houses.

The greater amity between co-residents was due to a number of factors. First, closer kinship ties usually prevailed, second, people on

CHAPTER FOUR

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

182 The lapse of many religious practices and the lessening of interest in
77/ those aspects of culture that we classify as religion were striking features
829 of this dying society. Older informants remembered the time when there
were ceremonial masks, the flute house, and other traits that are still
found among certain tribes of the upper Xingú. Indeed, if it were not
for Matiwana's unusual age, the Trumai would be even more lacking in
ceremonial knowledge. Yet there seems to have been little regret on the
part of either the older or younger generations for this culture loss.
They shrugged it off, saying that their grandfathers had had such
practices, but that they did not. This indifference is not too surprising,
[177] since much of their religion was borrowed from their upper Xingú
neighbors not too long ago.¹

791 Despite the decline in interest in the ceremonial cycle and the dis-
105 appearance of certain religious traits, the main outlines of Trumai
religion were still observable in Quain's time. Shamanism was still
practiced extensively, but it was simple both in form and supporting
ideology. Ceremonialism was related to subsistence and curing. The
shaman's individualized power resulted in a specialization of religious
functions as did the individual ownership of ceremonial songs and
dances. Some Trumai, like old Matiwana, were better versed in the
[193] religious rites than others, but they did not constitute a priestly class.
While no one person interceded with the supernatural on behalf of the
[182] whole village, the group ceremonies provided a focal point for social
participation and village cooperation, and many of them were under-
taken by the community for the benefit of all.

Shamanism

756 The shamanistic art of curing was known and employed by nearly
[184] all the adult males of the village, and in this sense parallels the practices
recorded among the Kamayurá by Oberg.² There is, however, a type

¹ Kamayurá ceremonial and religious life, much of which was once shared by the Trumai, is discussed by Oberg (1963) and Galvão (1949, 1950). The extent of Trumai culture loss can be roughly inferred from these sources and from the work of the earlier ethnologists.

² Oberg 1963, p. 60.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

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Jakwanari then presented to the dancers as payment. In another part of the ceremony, a gourd of the *piqui* fruit drink was poured on Jakwanari in the same manner that the manioc gruel was poured on Matiwana during the *ole* festival.

The Spear-Throwing Contest

The spear-throwing contest involved intertribal participation and was completely secular. The core of the celebration, which took place at the end of the rainy season, was a duel between rival teams representing the tribes of the area. The purpose of the duel was for a member of the team on the offensive to strike a member of the defending team with a blunt-ended spear propelled by an *atlatl*, or spear-thrower. The defendant held a few sticks vertically, one end resting on the ground, and tried to deflect the oncoming spear with them. The distance between the two was about twenty paces and hits were frequently scored. After each turn, the defender went on the offensive. The games were conducted in a spirit of friendship and festivity. Bruises, some of which must have been severe, were compensated for by gift exchanges.

The participants painted their bodies elaborately for the combat. One informant erroneously stated that the masks for which the area is famous (but which were no longer made by the Trumai) were worn during one part of the festival.⁷ Intertribal wrestling matches were also held at this gathering.

The Bull Roarer

Information on the defunct bull roarer rites, as for other ceremonies, is extremely meagre. As the Trumai express it, they have "buried the *kukh*" (bull roarer), but most of the adult men knew the ritual connected with it and remembered when it was still in use. The Trumai formerly went to the Kamayurá village and took part in the ceremony there. One man told Quain that dancing in the Trumai village preceded the ritual, whereupon they all went to the Kamayurá village and "did things that the women cannot see." Then, he said, there was a great deal of wrestling and copulation. Yati, Maibu, and Tun played a ceremonial role known only to them, while Yati, Oirupa, and Nitvary sang certain songs at night when everyone was asleep. The ceremonial flutes found throughout the upper Xingú are not mentioned in Quain's notes. Apparently, they were no longer used by the Trumai.

⁷ These masks are worn during a ceremony called the *jakui* by the Kamayurá, which, according to Galvão (1950, p. 355.) takes place in the same season, thus explaining the confusion.

CHAPTER SIX THE DEATH OF A CULTURE

Today there are but twenty-five remaining Trumai. The fact that they disbanded once during the recent past shows that this small number approaches a critical point at which such a culture is no longer socially viable. If the present population trend continues, Trumai society will definitely end, and, with the complete assimilation of the descendants of the Trumai into other tribes, Trumai culture, except for those elements of it that have been adopted by their neighbors, will belong to the past. 105 161 182 [177]

Primitive cultures and the populations that transmitted them are disappearing in many parts of the world today. In most instances, however, they are being destroyed by extended face-to-face contacts with Western society. This is not precisely the case with the Trumai. Here, there was no large scale transmission of Western culture and no direct interaction with Brazilian society. But slight though the contact of the upper Xingú Indians with the whites was, it resulted in the introduction of respiratory infections that contributed greatly to their depopulation. In this sense, the white man is responsible for the impending death of the Trumai. 105 177 [164]

Although the Trumai were still carrying on their village life during Quain's residence and were to continue to do so, certain changes were taking place in their culture which were symptomatic of the fundamental instability induced by their low numbers. 105 198

It is immediately apparent that their weakness made the Trumai vulnerable to other tribes, both the nominally friendly ones of the upper Xingú Basin, and the hostile ones of the surrounding country. In 1938 the Trumai could not have successfully withstood a strong Suyá or Yuruna raid, nor could they have launched an attack upon the Suyá for women, as did the more vigorous Kamayurá. Indeed, the Trumai had good reason to fear the least sound in the jungle at night. 105 148 [152]

Also, the Trumai were held in low esteem by their immediate neighbors at the time of Quain's study. This was a severe blow to their *elan*, and it undoubtedly affected their self-image. It led, too, to more concrete results. As noted above, other tribes took Trumai women during their most fertile years, and it is almost certain that the few "outside" women, who were brought into the Trumai village through marriage, failed to restore the balance. Moreover, there were no "outside" men 105 182 148

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648 in the Trumai community, for, as Oberg notes, no adult male would choose to live with a people of such low status.¹

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162 It might be expected that the Trumai could have compensated for this drain by raising their birth rate. However, in this population of 43 persons, there were only ten children, an extremely small number when the low average life span is considered. Furthermore, only two of the children were females. Of the approximately twelve women who were capable of bearing children, only one was pregnant, and the others were urging her to abort her child. Thus, infanticide and abortion were taking a heavy toll in the Trumai village.

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847 The custom of killing twins and of spacing births three or four years apart are reported by Oberg for the Kamayurá,² and these factors may well have been present in the Trumai situation. The long post-natal taboo on sexual intercourse had the same effect. Wagley, who studied the dying but equally unacculturated Tapirapé, found that traditional practices were contributing to the complete depopulation of that group also.³

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154 But among the Trumai there is still another and less tangible dimension. Abortion may have been urged on a pregnant woman because she had no husband, but how is one to explain the killing of two of Aloari's children without his consent, or the fact that there were eight male and only two female children in the community? The limited information available suggests that the Trumai were purposely restricting their number and committing suicide, perhaps unintentionally, in the process. Two reasons for this extreme behavior may be hypothesized: first, the impasse in which the Trumai found themselves because of the steady depopulation made them so personally insecure and apathetic regarding both the present and the future that they were no longer willing to rear sizable families, despite their evident devotion to children; and second, they may not have thought it possible to produce the surplus necessary to support such families. Actually, however, even with their diminished numbers the Trumai could have increased their food supply.

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226 Their lowered standard of living was due to more than attitudes. Loss of population no doubt also decreased the yield of Trumai fishing and therefore limited their chief source of protein. To be sure, bow and arrow fishing was little affected, but fish poisoning, the only communal subsistence technique practiced by them, was much less effective when employed by a small group, for a few people can adequately poison only smaller watercourses and branches of lagoons, while a greater number can cover larger streams and whole lagoons. In the latter circumstance, both the take would be larger and larger species would be available. Moreover, when the waters are heavily poisoned and enough people are present to reap the "harvest," there is less chance of fish escaping. Thus, up to

¹ Oberg 1953, p. 15.

² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

³ Wagley 1940.

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174 serious damage to the individual personality. Also, many individuals
571 could not enact whole sets of kin-determined roles because they had no
602 relatives of the proper complementary status. For example, parents-in-
law normally exerted considerable influence and control over younger
[606] married couples, but hardly anyone in the village had such relatives.
[582] Similarly, cross-cousin marriage was the preferred union, but cross-
cousins were generally unavailable. Moreover, because of the shortage
[598] of women, marriage came to be more a cause of conflict than a con-
solidator of kinship bonds.

105 Not only was the family world of the Trumai crumbling, but all lines
182 of authority and social control were weak. The Trumai seemed unable
626 to unite for such culturally approved purposes as economic cooperation
or hospitality. Trumai leadership, like that of many primitive peoples,
was predicated on the existence of strong bonds of kinship, economic
interdependence, and a general agreement on goals and policies. These
preconditions were no longer found among the Trumai. In this struc-
[624] tural vacuum, the Trumai chief was less and less able to cope with the
growing self-assertiveness of certain men, and was increasingly forced
into a neutral role. As the community weakened, his position weakened.

105 A number of reasons account for the factionalism which developed
182 within the Trumai village. Some are a function of personality, others of
578 the diminished population. Obviously women were at a premium and
many men were compelled to do without mates. The resultant com-
petition was, as we have seen, a festering sore in the body politic.
Connected with it, but having further ramifications, the bonds of
kinship and the expected behavior between kinsmen underwent attrition
and upset what social balance could have been achieved under more
normal conditions. Indeed fear of the outside world more than internal
forces of cohesion held the Trumai community together.

Other integrative mechanisms in Trumai culture were also disappear-
[996] ing. Conspicuous among them was the gradual abandonment of many
elements in the Trumai ceremonial cycle. (Significantly this left the
105 highly individual practice of shamanism as the most active religious
182 expression in Trumai culture). In part, this loss may have been due to
771 the inability of the Trumai to amass a sufficiently large food surplus
for the feasting that was required when visitors from other tribes were
present. Not enough is known about the ritual of the Trumai to warrant
any broad generalizations on the effects of depopulation on ceremonial
participation, but their numbers may well have been approaching the
minimum necessary to carry out the rites. Only a few men who had
depended heavily on one old man for their instruction possessed the re-
quisite ceremonial knowledge. When this old man died, Trumai culture
must have suffered a severe blow. Younger men were little interested in
learning the ritual and lore. Moreover, the small number of bearers of

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Trumai culture and the shortness of their average life span must have seriously interfered with the instruction of the young. In addition, the very eclecticism of Trumai culture militated against conservatism and is indicative of the low value which they placed on their own culture. 105 182 771

In the chapter on religion, the disinterest of the people in their religious activities was often noted. Such behavior may appear paradoxical, but ethnographic literature provides many instances of the decline of traditional belief systems in the face of cultural crisis. In the case of the Trumai, disinterest in the religious sphere was closely related to disinterest in other aspects of their culture. The Trumai world view had become a philosophy of despair. While depopulation was causing social and cultural disintegration, cultural factors in their turn were furthering depopulation. The Trumai were set in a steady downward spiral. [81]

In summary it can be said that, on the basis of Quain's notes, the Trumai were an anxiety-ridden people. They were extremely sensitive and their feelings were easily hurt. They demanded individual recognition and attention. They were disinclined to work in their own interest or to join with each other in community projects. Apathetic towards their own world, they were distrustful of the world outside. These observations find considerable confirmation in de Lima's comments on the Trumai: 105 152 156 181

The behavior of this tribe which lives today in a state of humiliation and withdrawal in the face of the other peoples, is quite different from that of the Tupians. They are extremely distrustful Indians; they do not have a frank and happy expression and no matter how long one lives with them they remain always shut off. They do not have the dynamism, nor the disposition to work of the Kamayurá.*

It seems certain that this personality structure was not a survival of their more prosperous pre-contact period, when the Trumai enjoyed some renown as warriors, but was a product of the growing distress which emerged during the period when their whole security system of the individual — kinship and community — was breaking down. Under the new circumstances the individual Trumai was no longer lodged in the matrix of the extended family. No longer did the rules of kinship that had formerly guided interpersonal relations operate smoothly for him. No longer did a vigorous community intervene between him and the outside world. There was no strong family, community, or tradition with which he could identify himself. The weakening of the socio-cultural structure precipitated him into conflict with his fellows; and it caused him to transfer some of his dependence to other and stronger groups. And in this effort also, he was unsuccessful, for other tribes looked down upon him as a member of an irredeemably inferior group. 105 152 182

* De Lima 1949, p. 25.

105 The dilemma of the individual, itself a function of the deterioration
182 of the group, strengthened the centripetal forces within the society. Similarly, the apathy induced by the process of ego-destruction rendered the Trumai economically incompetent, and reduced the village to a marginal level of subsistence. Under these conditions, his failure to procreate is understandable.

But no one factor explains the passing of the Trumai. This was not the result of an acculturative process, since the Trumai were not adapting to anything new. Their recent history, however, underlines a development in which depopulation, cultural disintegration and personality disorganization engendered further depopulation, cultural disintegration, and personality disorganization. That such a development is cataclysmic in a group as small as the Trumai is shown by the marginality of the twenty-five survivors and the precarious position of their social identity only seventeen years after Quain left their midst.

105 "Tremendous interest in property, together with a simple and declin-
181 ing culture, results in my being a seriously disturbing element in their
421 lives. Casual conversation always degenerates into a squabble about
578 gift-giving There is intense pleasure in possession. Children get
431 no sympathy when they are hurt, but objects are usually given to them.
855 Every child has the right at least 'to see' anything he desires. In this
respect children are pampered. Adults whine for things; withholding
a desired object makes them intensely unhappy. Aggressive possession
is admired. . Trade games make the exchange of property very fluid.
437 Yet values in trade are well defined, and there is no prestige in giving
524 more than one gets. Within the kinship circle, however, the old lavish
858 property on the young. A father's garden is spoken of as that of his five
431 year old son. There is a deliberate attempt to instill aggressive ownership
865 attitudes in the young. A three year old girl is taught to claim objects in
a loud voice. This is done by shouting the possessive pronoun. . . .

105 "These are a settled people who live within the strict limits of their
[361] village. Their small number has advantage in the study of individuals.
They have no knowledge of the world beyond the Kuluene-Kuliseu. It
has no more real existence than the various inhabited regions of the
heavens. The half dozen expeditions which have passed down the river
have communicated with the natives only with signs. The one important
result of such contact was division from peripheral tribes and the rise of
[924] metal tools. The disappearance of the stone industry, on which a defunct
[182] Trumai moiety had a monopoly, has occurred within the last generation.¹
The increased leisure which probably resulted is not utilized economically.

105 "The complete lack of self-consciousness among these people makes
123 behavior observation remarkably easy. Before I knew any of the
156 language, I could sit by the hour in various households and time the
actions of people while they paid no attention to me. For instance, one
man during twenty minutes of leisure lay down to rest in his hammock
fifteen different times, but each time disturbed himself with the re-
membrance of some petty chore undone. . . .

[849] "The only restriction of behavior that I have seen in casual intra-
village personal relations is that the children are told not to litter the
105 floor. The only positive rule is that the head of a household must sit
[574] with a guest and converse while the guest is inside his house
Furthermore, extra-marital sexual intercourse has occurred in a sha-
[833] dowy corner of my house. . This lack of self-consciousness contrasts
strongly with the Karajá, who are more prudish than the Fijians. . . .

105 "Shortage of women, because of theft of young women, polygamy,
162 lack of sexual interest in old wives (of which there are several), and
831

[616] ¹ Quain refers here to the moiety-like division of the Trumai which has been
discussed in Chapter Three. This appears to be rather a result of the merger of the
northern and southern Trumai villages. The latter specialized in axe-making.

- 105 "Angry stylized quarreling is a legal device. The village hoots in
626 derision at him whose argument is poor. The chief must be a master at
578 this kind of argument, but all men and even women participate
[622] Though everyone makes speeches, it is only the chief who makes executive
speeches. Quarrels have always been about women, with the
[123] exception of the one which occurred upon my arrival in the village (one
party disapproved of me...). The chief does not interfere in personal
[622] quarrels. The other men sit quietly in the center of the village smoking
and trying to disregard the quarrel, which may be going on over their
very heads. When the contenders have retired from the village green,
they are perfectly calm. The argument is suspended until it can be
carried on publicly. There seem to be no secret alliances among the men.
- 105 "Another thing I must mention is the complete lack of emotional
182 content in religious ceremonies. These are mildly pleasant chores.
771 Although their structure is designed for a public pageant, nobody pays
796 attention."